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RC&D

**for
your
community**

**Facts about
resource
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and development
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
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RC&D for your community

...facts about resource conservation and development areas

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) areas help people care for and use their natural resources in a way that will improve their community's economy, environment, and living standards.

RC&D areas are locally organized, sponsored, and directed. They provide a way for people to work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their community a better place in which to live.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is authorized through the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 and other authorities to provide local units of government technical and financial help in conserving and using their natural resources. USDA also helps those groups sponsoring RC&D areas seek funds and services from federal, state, and local sources. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has leadership in USDA for the RC&D Program.

What RC&D can do

Sponsors of each RC&D area have their own locally defined goals, but in general the goals are to:

- Improve land and water resources for agricultural, municipal, industrial, recreation, transportation, and wildlife uses.
- Achieve better land use: protect prime farmland and convert poorly suited cropland to grassland, woodland, wildlife habitat, or recreation use.
- Carry out RC&D planned activities such as erosion and sedimentation control, flood prevention, farm irrigation, land drainage, fish and wildlife habitat improvement, and water quality management.

- Improve and expand recreation facilities; preserve and promote historical and scenic sites.
- Encourage existing industries to expand and new ones to locate in the RC&D area and thus create jobs; encourage industries to process and use products of the area.
- Improve local markets for farm crops and forest and handcraft products.
- Improve, build, or bring in needed community facilities such as hospitals, schools, sewage treatment plants, solid-waste disposal systems, water systems, and roads.
- Encourage training and retaining programs to broaden job skills.
- Provide soil, water, and related information to agencies who guide resource management. This helps them plan for farming, ranching, recreation, wildlife, housing, industry, and transportation.
- Reduce pollution of air, water, and soil.

Size of RC&D areas

RC&D areas usually include more than one county. They are big enough to have substantial natural resources to use for economic improvement and community betterment, but small enough that local leadership can plan for and carry out improvements for the whole area.

Local people are the key

In RC&D areas all interests are encouraged to work together. Self-help activities are emphasized. Local people provide the leader-

ship and set the direction for RC&D activities. Teamwork between the people and the public agencies assisting them is what makes an RC&D area a success.

Local people interested in getting RC&D assistance usually set up a steering committee to get needed citizen participation and support for obtaining sponsors for an RC&D application. Eligible sponsors can include conservation districts, county and town governments, towns, and local and state agencies.

How to start an RC&D area

Interested groups should consult the local conservation district or local SCS representative who is usually headquartered in the county seat.

Step 1. Notification of intent

Sponsors first send a notice to concerned areawide and state clearinghouses of their intent to apply for RC&D program assistance. The clearinghouses reply if they foresee problems that may affect existing state, areawide, or local plans or programs.

Step 2. Preparing an application

Sponsors establish an RC&D council to coordinate their activities. If there is an areawide planning agency, the council makes a written agreement with the agency that shows how their respective planning efforts will be coordinated.

Sponsors prepare an application requesting RC&D program assistance. They briefly state their problems, resources, goals, proposed activities, and expected benefits, and describe how they will direct the RC&D program. SCS and other federal and state agencies can help the council prepare the application.

Groups like civic clubs, churches, and chambers of commerce can endorse the application. Then it goes to the governor or his designated agency for endorsement before it is submitted to the SCS state conservationist. He makes recommendations and forwards it to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Step 3.

Preparing and carrying out the plan

If the Secretary of Agriculture authorizes RC&D program assistance, the SCS state conservationist names a coordinator to help the council and their committees plan and carry out their RC&D area activities. Citizen participation is a requirement. The coordinator works closely with other federal, state, and local agencies who are helping.

The RC&D plan describes in detail the area, problems, and opportunities. It states the goals and the activities to be adopted to achieve those goals. The plan can be amended later to meet changing needs and to capitalize on new opportunities.

When the sponsors adopt the plan, it is sent to the governor. After he endorses it, the state conservationist continues RC&D technical and financial assistance if the plan meets program requirements. Sponsors and the coordinator work together to get the cooperation of all state and federal agencies, private groups, and individuals who can help.

Federal agencies are encouraged to provide technical assistance, such as planning and engineering, and financial assistance in the form of cost sharing and loans for eligible projects and measures.

Efficient management can benefit an RC&D area while the plan is being carried out. Many activities result in immediate job and income opportunities for local people.

Getting RC&D into action

Many RC&D activities are locally financed.

Some activities, such as flood prevention, erosion control, land drainage, farm irrigation, agriculture-related pollutant control, and public water-based fish and wildlife and recreation developments, are often financed through RC&D funds. Cost sharing through the Agricultural Conservation Program (Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service) may be available to groups or individuals for conservation work. RC&D loans through the Farmers Home Administration may be available to help people meet their share of the costs.

Assistance from other federal and state programs is often provided to RC&D sponsors to help them carry out their plan.

Further information on RC&D

Contact your local conservation district or local Soil Conservation Service representative. The SCS office is listed in telephone directories under U.S. Government, Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. Assistance is available without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.

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